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ABSTRACT

This booklet was developed to provide a brief review of adult characteristics and teaching methods for the new teacher of adults. The first of eleven sections highlights adult education and how to use the booklet to improve instruction. Section 2 lists general and physical characteristics of adults and their implications on teaching. The third section suggests activities for the first meeting of the adults class. Section 4 presents four criteria for writing behavioral objectives and the fifth section reviews how to write lesson plans. The sixth and seventh sections discuss instructional methods for the adult class and how to choose the appropriate methods. Sections 9 and 10 list tips on teaching adult basic education and the competencies of a successful teacher of adults. The final section contains two suggested models for teachers of adults to use in planning adult education programs. (LRA)

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"SO YOU'RE HELPING ADULTS LEARN"

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

All of you who have been asked to serve as teachers in our Adult Education Program have been selected because you have the knowledge, the skill, the interest and enthusiasm, and the love of people, to make you a valuable and integral part of our program.

We hope that this information will be helpful to you in your teaching role.

EUGENE LEHRMANN
STATE DIRECTOR
WISCONSIN BOARD OF
VOCATIONAL, TECHNICAL AND ADULT EDUCATION

PREFACE

This booklet was first published in 1959 by the State Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education, Madison, Wisconsin, C. L. Greiber, Director, under the title of "So You're Teaching Adults". Over the years, the philosophy and approach of working with adults has changed from that of "teaching" to that of "helping adults learn". Note that the new title "So You're Helping Adults Learn" reflects this change. This booklet was revised by Dr. Ted Wiehe, Professor of Industrial Education, University of Wisconsin-Stout.

If you are just joining the ranks of the adult educators, welcome to the fastest growing area of education in the country. The realization by adults that they can learn is causing greater numbers of them to participate in different avenues of continuing education. Longer life spans and greater amounts of leisure time have resulted in "lifetime learning" on the part of many adults.

A number of societal changes have made it necessary for public schools and private agencies to provide learning environments that provide easy entry and exit opportunities that meet individual needs. Special emphasis continues to be given to adult continuing vocational education for the purpose of training and retraining.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide a brief review of adult characteristics and teaching methods for the new teacher of adults. It is meant for both the experienced teacher as well as for the technically qualified person who is teaching classes for the first time.

Theodore E. Wiehe
August 1978
University of Wisconsin-Stout
Menomonie, Wisconsin

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1. ADULT EDUCATION

The success of an adult education or (continuing education) program depends for the most part on the quality of teaching that takes place. Successful teachers of adults know their subject matter, are familiar with the characteristics of adults, know what methods or approaches to use with them, and have a caring attitude toward their individual class members.

Current psychologists and authorities in adult education place considerable emphasis on the adults becoming self-directed learners. This booklet supports this philosophy to a point. With an attempt to have learners become self-directed may come a need for a change of attitude on the part of both the teacher and the learner.

Improvement of instruction should be kept uppermost in the minds of all successful educators. With this in mind, this booklet presents information that will serve either as a "nutshell glimpse" or as a "refresher" for those who are concerned with teaching adults. It is suggested that the new teacher of adults record some of his/her early sessions (either on sound or video-tape) to determine teaching effectiveness. The evaluation sheets included in the booklet can be used in the critiquing process. Solo critiquing is valuable but asking a fellow professional to assist in the evaluation can be extremely beneficial and worthwhile.

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNERS

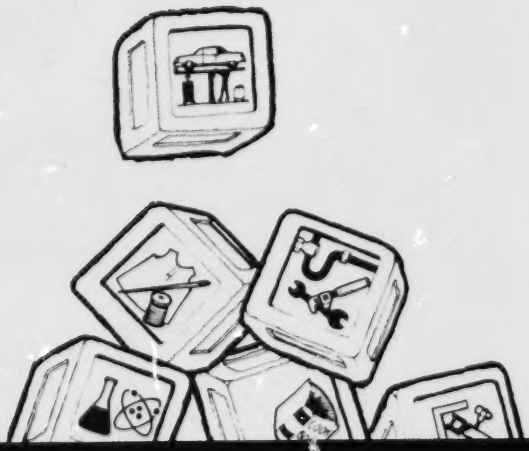
The teacher of adults needs to recognize that older learners sometimes have different characteristics than youthful learners. The noticable changes in characteristics as the adult ages (18 through 30 +) will most commonly relate to experience, motivation, physical decline, and interests (vocational, cultural, and leisure).

Some of the more common general characteristics of adults along with some teaching implications are presented here.

CHARACTERISTICS	TEACHING IMPLICATIONS
1. Have the ability to learn in spite of the common misconception that oldsters cannot learn.	They need frequent assurance of this, however, for some, it will take a bit longer.
2. Have opinions and want to express them.	This provides relevancy.
3. Like to share their varieties of experiences.	They learn best if they are involved.
4. Respond more favorably to praise.	An extremely important motivational device, but use it judiciously.
5. Differ from one another.	More so than in a high school class in age, mental ability and education.
6. Like informality and variety.	Set the tone and provide environment for this.
7. Like to socialize.	Set times for coffee breaks and join in.
8. Don't like to waste time.	Their time away from family and work is valuable.
9. Learn best by doing.	Like activity, not dull lectures.
10. Will drop out easily.	Have them experience success during the first few classes.
11. Like to help set goals.	Learn best if they get immediate benefits.
12. Like to learn at their own pace.	Provide individualized instruction.
13. Want to be treated as adults and friends.	Be human.
14. Learn best if a variety of teaching techniques are used.	Be imaginative.
15. Prefer guidance over grades.	They fear public humiliation.
16. Want to see immediate benefits.	Plan specific and practical situations.
17. Want to know how they are doing.	Explain progress toward their chosen goals.

Some of the physical characteristics (sometimes found in older adults) and some corresponding allowances appear here.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	REMEDIAL CONSIDERATIONS
1. Visual acuity is not as sharp.	Requires more light, larger visuals.
2. Hearing may be impaired.	Teacher should talk louder and slower.
3. Slower physical movements.	May take a bit longer to learn.
4. Less physical strength.	May tire easily so allow more time.
5. Susceptible to heat and cold.	Teacher should check room temperature.
6. Muscles and backs become tense.	Take frequent short breaks to relax.
7. Unable to climb stairs.	Schedule classrooms on first floor, or have use of an elevator.



3. THE FIRST MEETING OF THE CLASS

The first meeting of the adult class and teacher is the most important one. A well-planned orientation of the adult student is extremely important. When the student receives his/her first impression, it should stimulate an interest in the subject, the teacher, and fellow students. From this interest a successful and satisfying learning experience should result.

What follows are some suggested activities for the first meeting of the class:

1. Be in the room ahead of time to greet the first student. Act as a friendly host.
2. Be sure the room is ready. Arrange the setting as you want it so as to help sociability. Adults like to see faces, not the backs of heads. Provide 5" x 8" cards on which class members can print their names. These are folded and placed in front of each student so names can be learned quickly.
3. Create a warm situation. It is important that class members and teacher get acquainted. Lead off a round of introductions by stating your own name and giving some background information about yourself. Ask the others to follow your example.
4. Explain your role as a facilitator of learning. Further explain that there will be mutual planning in both class and individual goals of the course. The objectives will be arrived at as a result of assessing the needs of the class members.
5. Explain that it is your hope that they will become self-directed learners.
6. Emphasize that promptness and continuous attendance is necessary if maximum benefit is to be derived.
7. Explain the types of supplies and equipment to be used and the care and cost of it.
8. Inform students in a positive manner about rules or regulations in and around the school facilities.
9. Explain the required attendance and satisfactory class participation if certificates are given.

4. INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

Developing instructional objectives prior to teaching a unit of study or individual lesson is necessary to achieve desired learning outcomes. Instructional objectives for adults are frequently developed jointly by both the instructor and the learner.

Objectives should be written so that a change of behavior takes place in the learner following the learning experiences.

There are four criteria that should be included in a behavioral objective. Each criteria is described briefly in the next few paragraphs.

1. An objective should say WHO is going to accomplish the objective. The terms that typically are used include "you", "student", "learner", and "class".

2. It must say WHAT the student will learn or be able to do after the objective is accomplished. In other words, the point of the lesson or unit should be stated briefly. Some examples are: to write, to recite, to differentiate, to solve, to identify, to list, to compare, to construct, to cut, to adjust, and to contrast. These "action verbs" indicate terminal behavior.

3. It states under what CONDITIONS or "learning environment" the student will be able to perform. The conditions can be stated in terms of what the student will be given, allowed or restricted in the lesson. Some examples follow:
   A. Given a handbook with specifications . . .
   B. Given any reference material . . .
   C. Given a properly functioning . . .
   D. Allowed the assistance of other students . . .
   E. Without the aid of references . . .
   F. Without the use of tools . . .
   G. Allowed the benefit of the class discussion . . .

4. It will say to what DEGREE of PERFORMANCE the student should be able to do the objective. It indicates a minimum standard of achievement or degree of proficiency. They can be stated in terms of quantity, quality, or level of confidence. The learner needs to know what is "passing". For example:
   A. Identify all . . .
   B. Cut within + or - 1/16" . . .
   C. List three . . .

The following are examples of behavioral objectives:

Given several references, you will be able to describe in writing six teaching techniques that would be suitable for use with adults over fifty years old.

Without the use of references, you will be able to describe verbally three of the four criteria used in writing behavioral objectives.

Given the type of metal to be turned on a lathe and the diameter, you will calculate without error the R.P.M.'s in at least six of eight problems.

Given the necessary equipment, you should be able to drive an 8-penny common nail using a 16 oz. hammer into white pine in six swings without marking the surface of the board.

Using any reference material, the student will be able to name correctly every piece of equipment used in cutting out a dress pattern.

5. LESSON PLANNING

The planning of lessons is an important part of the preparation for teaching. The reasons for lesson planning include: proper organization, timing, sequencing of content, lists material to be presented, how content will be presented, and lists activities in which the learners will be involved in accomplishing the objectives. An example of a developed lesson plan is shown here.

LESSON PLAN

Unit No 1 Lesson No 2 Time Required 15 minutes

Course Title Auto Mechanics I

Lesson Title Four Types of Wrenches

Behavioral Objective/s Without the use of references, you will identify the four types of wrenches described. You must score 100% on a short test at the end of the lesson.

References and Pages: Auto Mechanics Fundamentals, Stockel, p.p. 436, 437 & 439

Instructional Aids	Tools, equipment, and materials
Transparencies, Chalkboard	Assortment of four types of wrenches.

Teacher (Introduction, Presentation, Summary and Evaluation)	TIME	Student Involvement (Discussion questions, notes, other activity)
I. Introduce Behavioral Objectives	2 min	please take brief notes.
II. Open End A. Quicker B. Less grip on nut - can slip	3 min	What could happen if the wrench slips?
III. Box End A. Good grip on nut B. Slow to work with	2 min	
IV. Combination A. Good points and bad points	3 min	What do you think the name of this wrench is?
V. Adjustable Open End A. Quickly adjusted for size B. Tends to slip	3 min	What is one safety factor involved when using the open end? What do you think the name of this
VI. Summary. Evaluation	2 min	wrench is? What are the four wrenches discussed today?

6. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Large Group Methods

The typical **lecture** involves only vocal presentation of information without student involvement or audio visual aids. As some studies have found that only about ten percent of what we learn is through sound, it should be obvious that this is not one of the best methods of teaching. It can easily become boring to the learner. However, when used to motivate students or as an efficiency measure, the creative teacher may be able to use the more slowly delivered lecture quite effectively.

The **illustrated lecture** is much preferred over the lecture itself. Larger and uncluttered visuals used to emphasize important points are utilized singularly or in a multi-media format. Some of the visuals that could be used to illustrate a lecture (speech) include: graphs, transparencies, pictures, chalkboard, drawings, slides, diagrams, mock-ups, models, maps, cut-a-ways, and flipcharts.

The discussion and inquiry method involves questioning, visuals and other means of involvement.

DISCUSSION CHECKLIST

After the teacher has made a presentation he/she could use the following checklist by asking, did I

- ☐ 1. Introduce the topic effectively?
  - ☐ a. Use an "attention getting" device?
  - ☐ b. Explain what behavior change was expected?
  - ☐ c. Give the conditions of learning?
  - ☐ d. State the proficiency of performance?
  - ☐ e. Provide motivation or "whys" of the importance of the topic?
- ☐ 2. Ask questions?
  - ☐ a. Pause after stating your question?
  - ☐ b. Reinforce or reward the student's response with positive words as "fine", or "good", or "keep up the good work"?
  - ☐ c. Give non-verbal signals such as smiling, nodding, clapping hands?
  - ☐ d. Use a variety of types of questions such as problem solving and leading?

☐ 3. Have good eye contact?

☐ a. Avoid looking at tools and other equipment too long?

☐ b. Talk to students, not at them.

☐ 4. Move your body and use gestures (face students for the lip readers)?

☐ 5. Vary the pitch of your voice?

☐ 6. Speak slower and louder?

☐ 7. Use words that students can understand?

☐ 8. Add interest by changing students' focus of attention frequently from chalkboard to transparency, to tools, to speaker, etc.?

☐ 9. Summarize after key points to assure understanding before advancing to new material?

☐ 10. Show enthusiasm?

The **demonstration method** lends itself easily to involving adults in problem-solving. They are more apt to suggest "steps of procedure" of performing a skill or psychomotor activity. Psychologists claim that the learner remembers or retains information in proportion to the number of senses involved. The demonstration lends itself well to utilizing most of one's senses.

DEMONSTRATION CHECKLIST

The spaces at the left could be used by you or a fellow evaluator to check your effectiveness as a demonstrator.

In my demonstration, did I

☐ 1. Prepare a topic outline?
☐ 2. Arrange room (warmer than usual and with brighter lights)?
☐ 3. Arrange audience so they could hear and see?
☐ 4. Give a full introduction to the skill to be learned?
☐ 5. Give clear explanations of steps of procedure?
☐ 6. Look and talk to all students?
☐ 7. Display skill in performance?
☐ 8. Ask variety of questions?
☐ 9. Use variety of visual aids?
☐ 10. Summarize and question at logical breaks in the demonstration to determine comprehension?
☐ 11. Ask one or two students to try the skill being demonstrated?
☐ 12. Summarize major points?

OTHER LARGE GROUP METHODS

Audio-Visual and printed materials are rapidly becoming available. CCTV (closed circuit television), ETN (educational telephone network), radio and newspapers all offer opportunities for the adult learner.

Guest speakers provide opportunities for experts to directly share their "know-how" and provide a means for dialogue between the class members and the guest speaker.

A field trip which is not a "guided tour" but an action-oriented investigation can add interest and motivation to a class. No classroom experience can replace personal observation. A teacher can make the most of a field trip by planning ahead and preparing the student for points to look for.

A panel discussion is a group of not more than eight people formed to discuss a problem. Research is done on the topic prior to class time and the discussion is held in front of the audience or class. Questions from the audience might be beneficial to the class.

Some adult learners become highly motivated when they can exchange ideas in smaller groups (4-7). Much shyness and lack of confidence can be overcome.

Buzz groups are like small discussion groups that are formed to determine alternatives concerning a specific topic. This is an informal method that might require changing of the seating pattern in the room. A secretary in the group should record the findings. Before breaking the class into groups of 4-6 each, the entire class is briefed on what the topic or topics are. Next the groups "buzz" for from three to six minutes. The findings are then consolidated and reported to the entire class. A total group discussion and summary by the instructor could then serve as a wrap up.

Brainstorming is a method to spark new ideas and to stimulate creative thinking. The imagination is used instead of reasoning. Brainstorming is listing all of the ideas that come to mind for a period of time regarding some problem. No judgement is made of the ideas. Brainstorming is usually accomplished in small groups but can also be done in larger groups. The group leader needs to guard against the group's tendency to want to discuss the pros and cons during the brainstorming.

Problem solving is a method in which both brainstorming and buzz grouping can be used. The following five-step method can easily be used to solve problems that adults are having in their daily work or lives.

1. Define the problem. (Sometimes a partial or total solution results from clearly expressing and writing the problem.)
2. List the possible causes. (Writing these out during a brainstorming session bears good results.)
3. List the possible solutions. (These could be obtained through buzz grouping.)
4. Select the best solution. (Sometimes a democratic show of hands is used here.)
5. Apply the selected solution.

Role playing is accomplished through the spontaneous acting out of a situation by two or more people. They show the emotional reactions of the people whose role they have been assigned. There is no script, no rehearsing, and no memorizing of lines. Role playing is applicable to human relations situations where strong biases or prejudices may be evident. Role playing can precede a lively large class discussion. The leader needs to: 1) provide descriptions of characters, 2) prepare name cards, 3) describe the setting of a situation or case, 4) let actors proceed and 5) follow with questions and discussion.

Individualizing Instruction

Individualized instruction is self-paced and organized so that students can enter and exit a training program at any time. It is personalized, humanized, flexible and designed to be meaningful and relevant to individual students. Individualized instruction should not be interpreted as one to one instruction or tutoring. Claims are made that individualized instruction caters to the various "learning styles" of the learners, thereby aiding larger numbers. Those that oppose individualized instruction say that poor readers do not do well with these methods.

Package instruction sometimes called LAP (Learning Activity Package) consists of information and assignments on relatively small topics. Instructional packages normally are made up of: 1) rationale, 2) behavioral goals, 3) a self test (gives areas of weakness), 4) a package body (indicates reading or audio-visual assignments), 5) post test and 6) final evaluation.

Learning contracts are used to clarify and formalize an agreement between individual students and the instructor. A contract form or sheet could have: 1) learning objectives, 2) learning strategies, 3) evidence of accomplishment, 4) means of evaluating outcomes and 5) signatures.

Programmed instruction is a method of self-instruction using a machine or printed material. Small steps in consecutive order along with self-check questions aid the progress of the student. An increasing number of commercial programs are becoming available. Adult basic education especially seems to provide a variety of programs.

7. CHOOSING APPROPRIATE METHODS FOR YOUR CLASSES

A number of considerations need to be kept in mind in selecting the best approach to use with certain groups or individuals. Following are some points to consider:

1. The subject matter.
2. The size of your class.
3. Availability of space.
4. Student experiences.
5. Student limitations (intellectual, physical, etc.).
6. Student interests and goals.
7. Economic factors.

8. TIPS TO KEEP ADULTS COMING BACK

1. Have a sense of humor.
2. Learn names of the students early and use them.
3. Plan carefully and use short units.
4. Use a variety of teaching methods and audio-visual aids.
5. Have students evaluate class meetings from the start.
6. Avoid busy work.
7. Be enthusiastic.
8. Use "we" not "I".
9. Avoid arguments (they can arise from politics, unionism, religion).
10. Encourage and praise students' accomplishments.
11. Avoid embarrassing or belittling.
12. Adapt assignments to the level of their experience, vocabulary, and available time.
13. Be flexible.
14. Be tactful, tolerant, and cheerful.
15. Start and dismiss class on time.
16. Have business-like appearance.
17. Use daily problems of class members if they fit the discussion.
18. Avoid word mannerisms, poor posture, and fiddling with things.

9. TIPS IN TEACHING ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

To be most effective with adults such as those in adult basic education, the adult educator should:

1. Begin where the student is.
2. Set goals and make sure the learner is successful from the start. Expect to function as a friend and counselor as well as an instructor.
3. Emphasize his/her strong points in other areas.
4. Use his/her background in building learning experiences.
5. Relate learning experiences to every-day living.
6. Vary the teaching techniques.
7. Respect and understand the student's way of life.
8. Be "down to earth" in conversation and dress.
9. Avoid homework.
10. Visit with students.
11. Provide individual attention.
12. Let them plan a party.
13. Encourage them to watch educational television.
14. Arrive early and remain late at class so private conversations can happen.
15. Call students Mrs., Miss, Ms., or Mr.
16. Raise students self-concept.
17. Identify student's level of aspiration and despair.

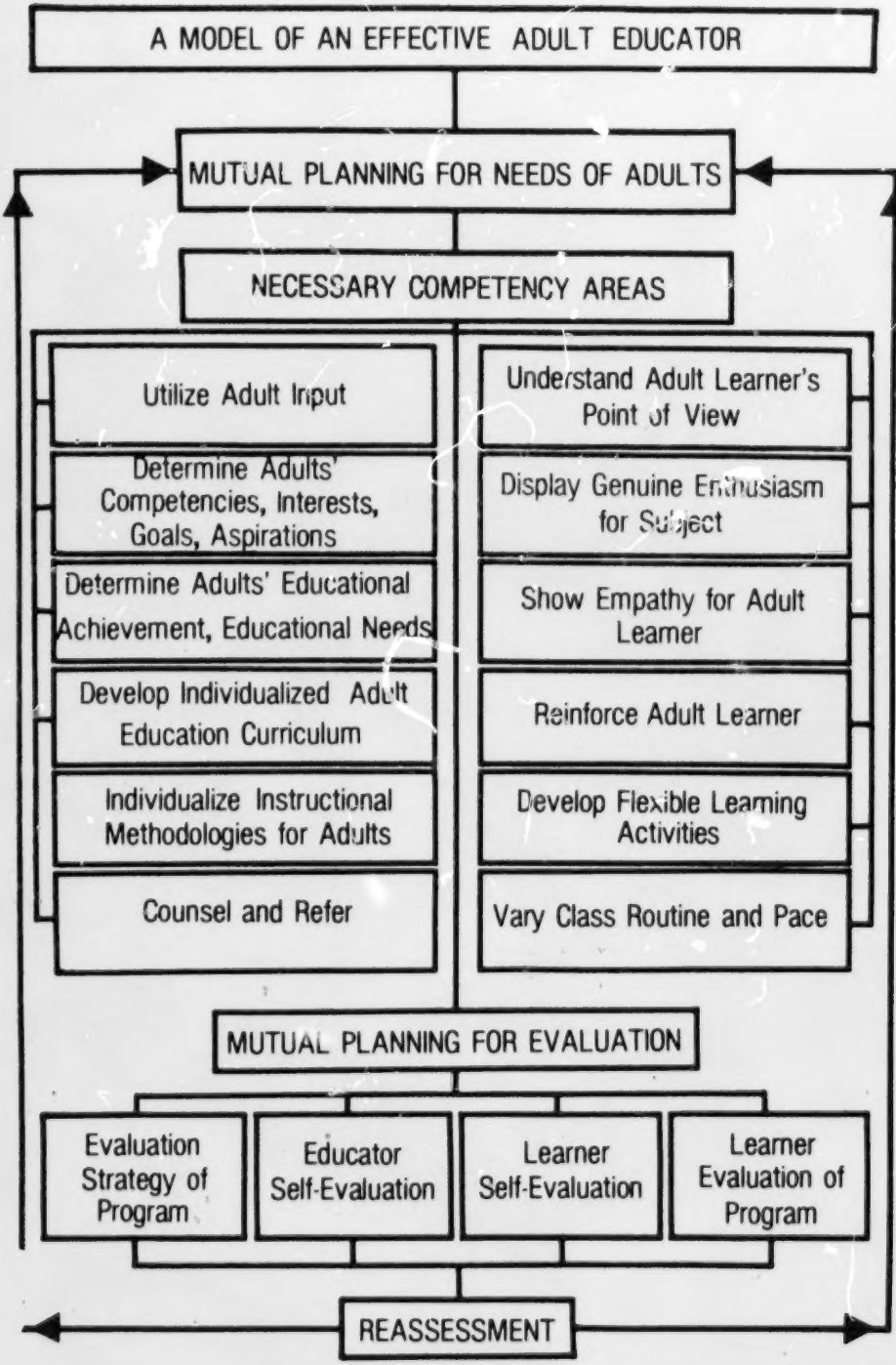
10. COMPETENCIES OF SUCCESSFUL TEACHER OF ADULTS

Students in adult classes expect their instructors to have certain competencies. If these abilities are apparent, the learners will be motivated to continue their learning. The following are a few of the competencies that researchers have found to rank the highest:

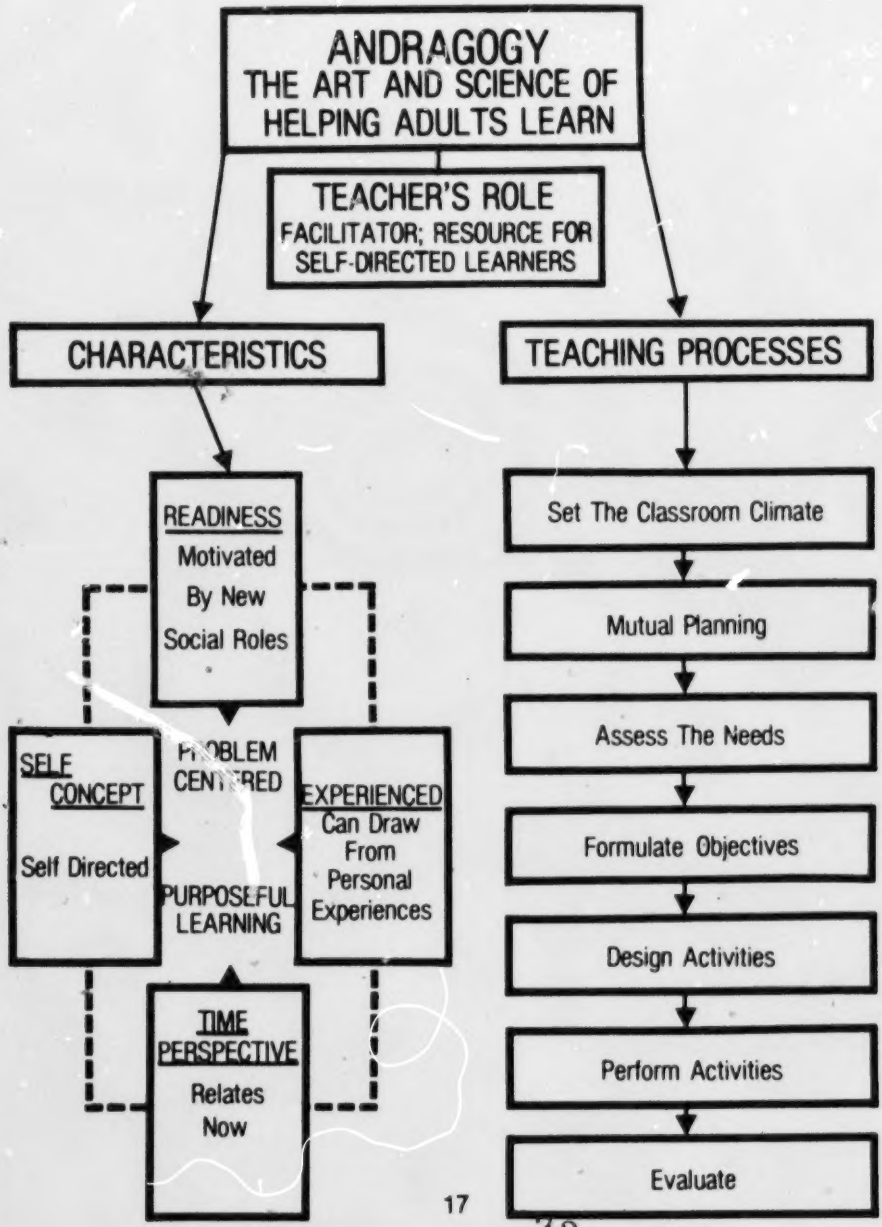
1. Knows the subject and is skilled in the craft.
2. Effectively communicates with adults.
3. Develops a climate that encourages participation.
4. Develops adult's sense of confidence.
5. Plans instruction at student's learning level.
6. Relates to differences in people.
7. Modifies instruction for individuals and class.
8. Humanizes and motivates.

11. SUGGESTED MODELS FOR TEACHERS OF ADULTS

A research worthy of reporting was conducted by Virginia McClellan for the Center for Vocational, Technical and Adult Education-University of Wisconsin-Stout. It studies the competencies unique to adult educators. A model was developed from the findings of this research. This model (slightly modified) is shown here.


A MODEL OF AN EFFECTIVE ADULT EDUCATOR
MUTUAL PLANNING FOR NEEDS OF ADULTS
NECESSARY COMPETENCY AREAS
Utilize Adult Input
Determine Adults' Competencies, Interests, Goals, Aspirations
Determine Adults' Educational Achievement, Educational Needs
Develop Individualized Adult Education Curriculum
Individualize Instructional Methodologies for Adults
Counsel and Refer
Understand Adult Learner's Point of View
Display Genuine Enthusiasm for Subject
Show Empathy for Adult Learner
Reinforce Adult Learner
Develop Flexible Learning Activities
Vary Class Routine and Pace
MUTUAL PLANNING FOR EVALUATION
Evaluation Strategy of Program
Educator Self-Evaluation
Learner Self-Evaluation
Learner Evaluation of Program
REASSESSMENT

Still another model has been developed from the writings of Malcolm S. Knowles. This model employs the term "Andragogy". The term, commonly used in Europe, describes adult education more adequately than the term pedagogy. It is defined as the "art and science of helping adult learners" whereas pedagogy is expressed as the "art and science of teaching children".



12. SUMMARY

The models for adult educators just shown indicate that researchers have found that there is a difference between "helping adult learners" and "teaching younger age groups."

The teacher of adults must have a special kind of empathy and patience. Once adults come to a class, they are most always highly motivated. Supervising learning activities for enthusiastic adults can be most gratifying.

Good luck in your adventure into "helping adults learn."

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13. PUBLICATIONS

The following periodicals will be helpful in providing meaningful educational activities for adult learners.

1. Administrator's Swap Shop
   Publication dealing with public administration
   Subscription rate: $5.00/yr. bimonthly
   Editorial Board National Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education 1201 6th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

2. Adult Leadership
   Publication dealing with adult education, occupations and careers
   Subscription rate: $13.00/yr. (Annual fee for professional membership is $30.00/yr. which includes subscription to both Adult Education and Adult Leadership)
   Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., The Otis Building, 810 Eighteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006

3. American Vocational Journal
   Publication dealing with vocational education
   Subscription rate: $8.00/yr. (Members of American Vocational Association, Inc., no charge)
   American Vocational Association, Inc., 1510 H. St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005

4. Techniques for Teachers of Adults
   Publications dealing with teaching techniques
   Subscription rate: $5.00/yr.
   National Association for Public Continuing and Adult Education, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036